Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism To-day

Three Addresses in Commemoration *of the* Four Hundredth Anniversary *of the* Birth of John Calvin

By

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD

Professor in Princeton Theological Seminary

PHILADELPHIA

THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION

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TO

Charles Adamson Salmond, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE SOUTH MORNINGSIDE CONGREGATION
OF THE UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,
EDINBURGH,

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MUCH KINDNESS.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE 7

JOHN CALVIN THE THEOLOGIAN. (*Address Delivered before the Ninth General Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Throughout the World, Holding the Presbyterian System;* New York, June 17, 1909)..... 9

THE THEOLOGY OF CALVIN. (*Address Delivered before the Officers, Students and Alumni of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church at Princeton*, May 4, 1909).... 18

PRESENT-DAY ATTITUDE TO CALVINISM. (*Address Delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, Savannah, May 27, 1909).... 29

PREFACE

The three addresses here printed were prepared upon the invitation respectively—in the order in which they here stand—of the Ninth General Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System; of the Faculty of the Theological Seminary at Princeton; and of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. They have been delivered at celebrations by these several organizations, held in the months of May and June, 1909, of the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. Some repetitions naturally occur in addresses on closely related themes designed for entirely distinct audiences. In bringing the addresses together no attempt has been made to remove these repetitions. The relative length of the addresses is not an index to the speaker's estimate of the relative importance of the topics treated, but is the result of the varying allowance of time placed at his disposal.

JOHN CALVIN THE THEOLOGIAN

The subject on which I am to address you is "John Calvin the Theologian." I take it that what will be expected of me is to convey to you some idea of the manner of theologian which John Calvin was, and of his quality as a theological thinker.

I am afraid I shall have to ask you at the outset to disabuse your minds of a very common impression. This impression, to wit: that Calvin's chief characteristics as a theologian were audacity—perhaps I might even say, effrontery—of speculation on the one hand; and on the other, pitilessness of logical development, cold and heartless scholasticism. We have been told, for example, that he reasons on the attributes of God precisely as he would reason on the properties of a triangle. No misconception could be more gross. The speculative theologian of the Reformation was Zwingli, not Calvin. The scholastic theologian among the early Reformed was Peter Martyr, not Calvin. This was thoroughly understood by their contemporaries. "The two most excellent theologians of our times," remarks Joseph Scaliger, "are John Calvin and Peter Martyr, the former of whom has dealt with the Holy Scriptures as they ought to be dealt with, with sincerity, I mean, and purity and simplicity, without any scholastic subtleties. Peter Martyr, because it seemed to fall to him to engage the sophists, has overcome them sophistically, and struck them down with their own weapons."

It is not to be denied, of course, that Calvin's was a speculative genius of the first order; and in the cogency of his logical

analysis he possessed a weapon which made him terrible to his adversaries. But it was not on these gifts that he depended in forming and developing his theological ideas. His theological method was persistently, rigorously, some may even say exaggeratedly, *a posteriori*. All *a priori* reasoning here he not only eschewed but vigorously repelled. His instrument of research was not logical amplification but exegetical investigation. In one word he was distinctively a Biblical theologian, or, let us say it frankly, the Biblical theologian, by way of eminence, of his age. Whither the Bible took him, thither he went: where scriptural declarations failed him there he stopped short.

It is this which imparts to his theological teaching the quality which is its prime characteristic, and its real offense in the eyes of his critics. I mean its positiveness. There is no mistaking the note of confidence in his teaching and it is perhaps not surprising that this note of confidence irritates his critics. They resent the air of finality he gives his declarations, not staying to consider that he gives them this air of finality because he presents them not as his teachings, but as the teachings of the Holy Spirit in His inspired word. Calvin's positiveness of tone is the mark thus not of extravagance but of sobriety, restraint. He even speaks with impatience of speculative, and what we may call inferential, theology; and is accordingly himself spoken of with impatience by modern historians of thought as a "merely Biblical theologian," who is, therefore, without any real doctrine, for example, of God, such as Zwingli has. The reproach, if it be a reproach, is just. Calvin refused to go beyond "what is written"—written plainly in the book of nature or the book of Revelation. He insisted that we can know nothing of God, for example, except what he has chosen to make known to us in his works and word; all beyond this is but empty

fancy which merely "flutters" in the brain. And it was just because he refused to go one step beyond what is written, that he felt so sure of his steps. He could not present the dictates of the Holy Ghost as a series of debatable propositions.

Such an attitude towards the Scriptures might conceivably consist with a thoroughgoing intellectualism, and Calvin certainly is very widely thought of as an intellectualist *a outrance*. But this again is an entire misapprehension. The positiveness of Calvin's teaching has a far deeper root than merely the conviction of his understanding. When Ernest Renan characterized him as the most Christian man of his generation, he did not mean it for very high praise; but he made a truer and much more profound remark than he intended. The fundamental trait of Calvin's nature was precisely—religion. It is not merely that all his thinking is colored by a deep religious sentiment: it is that the whole substance of his thinking is determined by the religious impulse and motive. His theology, if ever there was a theology of the heart, was accordingly distinctively a theology of the heart; and in him the maxim that it is the heart that makes the theologian finds perhaps its most eminent illustration.

His active and powerful intelligence, of course, penetrated to the depths of every subject which he touched; but he was incapable of dealing with any religious subject after a fashion which would minister only to what would seem to him the idle curiosity of the mind. It was not that he restrained himself from such merely intellectual exercises upon the themes of religion; the force of his religious interest itself instinctively inhibited them. He marked an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity: but of all great theologians who have occupied themselves with this soaring topic, none have been

more determined than he not to lose themselves in the metaphysical subtleties to which it invites the inquiring mind; and he marked an epoch in the development of the doctrine precisely because his interest in it was vital and not merely or mainly speculative. Or take the great doctrine of predestination which has become identified with his name, and with respect to which he is, perhaps, most commonly of all things, supposed to have given the reins to speculative construction and to have pushed logical development to unwarrantable extremes. Calvin, of course, in the pellucid clearness and incorruptible honesty of his thought, and in the faithfulness of his reflection of the Biblical teaching, fully grasped and strongly held the doctrine of the will of God as the *prima causa rerum;* and this too was a religious conception with him and was constantly affirmed just because it was a religious conception—yes, in a high and true sense, the most fundamental of all religious conceptions. But even so, it was not to this cosmical predestination that Calvin's thought most persistently turned, but rather to that soteriological predestination, on which, as a helpless sinner needing salvation from the free grace of God, he must rest. And therefore Ebrard is so far quite right when he says that predestination appears in Calvin's system not as the *decretum Dei* but as the *electio Dei.* It is not merely controversial skill which leads Calvin to pass predestination by when he is speaking of the doctrine of God and providence, and to reserve it for the point where he is speaking of salvation. This is where his deepest interest lay. What was suffusing his heart and flowing in full flood into all the chambers of his soul, was a profound sense of his indebtedness as a lost sinner to the free grace of God his Saviour. His zeal in asserting the doctrine of twofold predestination is grounded in the clearness with which he per-

ceived—as was indeed perceived with him by all the Reformers—that only so can the evil leaven of synergism be eliminated, and the free grace of God be preserved in its purity in the saving process. The roots of his zeal are planted, in a word, in his consciousness of absolute dependence as a sinner on the free mercy of a saving God; the sovereignty of God in grace was an essential constituent of his deepest religious consciousness. Like his great master Augustine; like Luther and Zwingli and Bucer, and all the rest of those high spirits who brought about that great revival of religion which we call the Reformation; he could not endure that the grace of God should not receive all the glory of the rescue of sinners from the destruction in which they are involved and from which, just because they are involved in it, they are unable to do anything looking towards their own recovery.

The fundamental interest of Calvin as a theologian lay, it is clear, in the region broadly designated soteriological. Perhaps we may go further and add that, within this broad field, his interest was most intense in the application of the salvation wrought out by Christ to the sinful soul—in a word, in what is technically known as the *ordo salutis*. This has even been made his reproach in some quarters; and we have been told that the main fault of the "Institutes" as a treatise in theological science lies in its too subjective character. Its effect, at all events, has been to constitute Calvin preëminently the theologian of the Holy Spirit.

He has made contributions of the first importance to other departments of theological thought. It has already been remarked that he marks an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. He also marks an epoch in the mode of presenting the work of Christ. The presentation of Christ's work

under the rubrics of the threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King was introduced by him; and from him was taken over by the entirety of Christendom, not always, it is true, in his spirit or with his completeness of development, but yet with large advantage. In Christian ethics, too, his impulse proved epoch-making; and this great science was for a generation cultivated only by his followers. It is probable, however, that his greatest contribution to theological science lies in the rich development which he gives—and which he was the first to give—to the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit; by which, as I have said, he has fairly earned the name of preëminently the theologian of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, from the origin of Christianity, everyone who has been even slightly imbued with the Christian temper has believed in the Holy Spirit as the author and giver of life, and has attributed all that is good in the world and particularly in himself to his holy offices. And, of course, in his doctrine of grace, Augustine worked out the doctrine of salvation as a subjective experience with great vividness and in great detail; and the whole course of this salvation was fully understood, no doubt, to be the work of the Holy Spirit. But in the same sense in which we may say that the doctrine of sin and grace dates from Augustine, the doctrine of satisfaction from Anselm, the doctrine of justification by faith from Luther,—we must say that the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from Calvin to the church. It was he who first related the whole experience of salvation specifically to the working of the Holy Spirit, wrought it out into its details, and contemplated its several steps and stages in orderly progress as the product of the Holy Spirit's specific work in applying salvation to the soul. Thus he gave

systematic expression to the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit and made it the assured possession of the church of God.

It has been common to say that Calvin's entire theological work may be summed up in this: that he emancipated the soul from the tyranny of human authority and delivered it from the uncertainties of human intermediation in religious things; that he brought the soul into the immediate presence of God and cast it for its spiritual health upon the free grace of God alone. Where the Romanist placed the church, it is said, Calvin set the Deity. The saying is true; and perhaps, when rightly understood and filled with its appropriate content, it may sufficiently characterize the effect of his theological teaching. But it is too generally expressed to be adequate. What Calvin did was, specifically, to replace the doctrine of the church as sole source of assured knowledge of God and sole institute of salvation, by the Holy Spirit. Theretofore men had looked to the church for all the trustworthy knowledge of God obtainable, and as well for all the communications of grace accessible. Calvin taught them that neither function has been committed to the church, but God the Holy Spirit has retained both in his own hands, and confers both knowledge of God and communion with God on whom he will. The "Institutes" is accordingly just a treatise on the work of God the Holy Spirit in making God savingly known to sinful man and bringing sinful man into holy communion with God. Therefore it opens with the great doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*—another of the fruitful doctrines which the church owes to Calvin—in which he teaches that the only vital and vitalizing knowledge of God which a sinner can attain is communicated to him through the inner working of the Spirit of God in his heart, without which there is spread in vain before his eyes the revelation of God's

glory in the heavens, and the revelation of his grace in the perspicuous pages of the word. And therefore it centers in the great doctrine of regeneration,—the term is broad enough in Calvin to cover the whole process of the subjective recovery of man to God,—in which he teaches that the only power which can ever awake in a sinful heart the motions of a living faith is the power of this same Spirit of God, moving with a truly creative operation on the deadened soul. When these great ideas are developed in their full expression—with explication of all their presuppositions in the love of God and the redemption of Christ, and of all their relations and consequents—we have Calvin's theology.

Now, of course, a theology which commits everything to the operations of that Spirit of God who "worketh when and where and how he pleases" hangs everything on the sovereign good-pleasure of God. Calvin's theology is therefore predestinarian to the core, and he does not fail, in faithfulness to the teachings of Scripture and with clear-eyed systematizing genius, to develop its predestinarianism with fullness and with emphasis; to see in all that comes to pass the will of God fulfilling itself and to vindicate to God the glory that is his due as the Lord and Disposer of all things. But this is not the peculiarity of his theology. Augustine had taught all this a thousand years before him. Luther and Zwingli and Martin Bucer, his own teacher in these high mysteries, were teaching it all, while he was learning it. The whole body of the leaders of the Reformation movement were teaching it along with him. What is special to himself is the clearness and emphasis of his reference of all that God brings to pass, especially in the processes of the new creation, to God the Holy Spirit, and the development from this point of view of a rich doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Here, then, is probably, Calvin's greatest contribution to theological development. In his hands, for the first time in the history of the church, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit comes to its rights. Into the heart of none more than into his did the vision of the glory of God shine, and no one has been more determined than he not to give the glory of God to another. Who has been more devoted than he to the Saviour by whose blood he had been bought? But above everything else it is the sense of the sovereign working of salvation by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit which characterizes all Calvin's thought of God. And above everything else he deserves, therefore, the great name of the theologian of the Holy Spirit.

THE THEOLOGY OF CALVIN

The subject on which I am to speak to you is "the Theology of Calvin," and I shall ask you to permit me to take this subject rather broadly. That is to say, I shall ask you to permit me to attempt not so much to describe the personal peculiarities of John Calvin as a theologian, as to indicate in broad outlines the determining characteristics of the theology which he taught. I wish to speak to you, in other words, about Calvinism,—about that great system of religious thought which bears John Calvin's name, and which also—although, of course, he was not its author but only one of its chief exponents—bears indelibly impressed upon it the marks of his formative hand and the stamp of his systematizing talent. Of all the teachers who have wrought into it their minds and hearts since its revival in that tremendous religious upheaval we call the Reformation, this system of thought owes most perhaps to John Calvin, and has therefore justly received its name from him. And of all the services which Calvin has rendered to humanity—and they are neither few nor small—the greatest was undoubtedly his gift to it afresh of this system of religious thought, quickened into new life by the force of his genius; and it is just, therefore, that he should be most widely remembered by it. When we are seeking to probe to the heart of Calvinism, we are exploring also most thoroughly the heart of John Calvin. Calvinism is his greatest and most significant monument; and he who adequately understands it will best understand him.

It was about a hundred years ago that Max Goebel first set

the scholars at work upon the attempt to isolate the formative principle of Calvinism. A long line of distinguished thinkers have exhausted themselves in the task, without attaining, we must confess, altogether consentient results. The great difficulty has been that the formative and distinctive principles of Calvinism have been confused; and men have busied themselves rather in indicating the points of difference by which Calvinism is distinguished from other theological tendencies than in seeking out the germinal principle of which it itself is the unfolding.

The particular theological tendency which Calvinism has been contrasted with in these discussions is, as was natural, the sister system of Lutheranism, with which it divided the heritage of the Reformation. Now, undoubtedly somewhat different spirits do inform Calvinism and Lutheranism. And equally undoubtedly the distinguishing spirit of Calvinism has its roots set in its formative principle and is not to be accounted for by some extraneous circumstance of its origin or antecedents, such as, for example, the democratic instincts of the Swiss, or the superior humanistic culture of its first teachers, or their tendency to intellectualism or to radicalism. But it is gravely misleading to identify the formative principle of either type of Protestantism with its prominent points of difference from the other. They have vastly more in common than in distinction. And nothing could be more misleading than to trace all their differences as to their roots, to the fundamental place given in the two systems respectively to the principles of predestination and justification by faith.

In the first place the doctrine of predestination is not the formative principle of Calvinism; it is its logical implication. It is not the root from which Calvinism springs; it is one of the

branches which it has inevitably thrown out. And so little is it the peculiarity of Calvinism, that it underlay and gave its form and power to the whole Reformation movement; which was, as from the spiritual point of view a great revival of religion, so from the doctrinal point of view a great revival of Augustinianism. There was, accordingly, no difference among the Reformers on this point: Luther and Melancthon and the compromising Bucer were no less zealous for absolute predestination than Zwingli and Calvin. Even Zwingli could not surpass Luther in sharp and unqualified assertion of it; and it was not Calvin but Melancthon who paused even in his first primary statement of the elements of the Protestant faith to give it formal assertion and elaboration.

Just as little can the doctrine of justification by faith be represented as specifically Lutheran. It is as central to the Reformed as to the Lutheran system. Nay, it is only in the Reformed system that it retains the purity of its conception and resists the tendency to make it a doctrine of justification on account of, instead of by, faith. It is true that Lutheranism is prone to rest in faith as a kind of ultimate fact, while Calvinism penetrates to its causes and places it in its due relation to the other products of God's activity looking to the salvation of man. And this difference may on due consideration conduct us back to the formative principle of each type of thought. But it too rather is an outgrowth of the divergent formative principles than the embodiment of them. Lutheranism, sprung from the throes of a guilt-burdened soul seeking peace with God, finds this peace in faith, and stops right there. It is so absorbed in rejoicing in the blessings which flow from faith that it refuses, or neglects, to inquire whence faith itself flows. It thus loses itself in a sort of divine euthumia and knows and will know

nothing beyond the peace of the justified soul. Calvinism asks with the same eagerness as Lutheranism the great question, "What shall I do to be saved?" and answers it precisely as Lutheranism answers it. But it cannot stop there. The deeper question presses upon it, "Whence this faith by which I am justified?" And the deeper response fills all the soul with adoration: "From the free gift of God alone, to the praise of the glory of his grace." Thus Calvinism withdraws the eye from the soul and its destiny and fixes it on God and his glory. It has zeal no doubt for salvation, but its highest zeal is for the honor of God, and it is this that quickens its emotions and vitalizes its efforts. It begins, it centers and it ends with the vision of God in his glory; and it sets itself before all things to render to God his rights in every sphere of life-activity.

If thus the formative principle of Calvinism is not to be identified with the points of difference which it has developed with its sister type of Protestantism, Lutheranism, much less can it be identified with those heads of doctrine—severally or in sum—which have been singled out by its own rebellious daughter, Arminianism, as its especially vulnerable points. The "five points of Calvinism" we have, no doubt, learned to call them; and not without justice. They are, each and every one of them, constitutive elements of the Calvinistic system, the denial of which in any of their essential details is logically the rejection of Calvinism; and in their sum they provide far from a bad epitome of the Calvinistic system. The sovereignty of the election of God, the substitutive definiteness of the atonement of Christ, the inability of the sinful will to good, the creative energy of the saving grace of the Spirit, the safety of the redeemed soul in the keeping of its Redeemer—are not these the distinctive teachings of Calvinism, as precious to every

Calvinist's heart, as they are necessary to the integrity of the system? When, therefore, they were selected as the objects of the Arminian assault, they were reaffirmed with the constancy of profound conviction by the whole Calvinistic world. It is well, however, to bear in mind that these "five points of Calvinism" owe their prominence in our minds to the Arminian debate, and however well fitted they may prove in point of fact to stand as a fair epitome of Calvinistic doctrine, are historically at least only the Calvinistic obverse of "the five points of Arminianism." And certainly they can put in no claim, either severally or in sum, to announce the formative principle of Calvinism, whose outworking in the several departments of doctrine they rather are—though, of course, they may surely and directly conduct us back to that formative principle, as the only root out of which just this body of doctrine could grow. Clearly, at the root of the stock which bears these branches must lie a most profound sense of God, and an equally profound sense of the relation in which the creature stands to God, whether conceived merely as creature or more specifically as sinful creature. It is the vision of God in his majesty, in a word, which lies at the foundation of Calvinistic thinking.

The exact formulation of the formative principle of Calvinism, as I have said, has taxed the acumen of a long line of distinguished thinkers. Many modes of stating it have been proposed. Perhaps after all, however, its simplest statement is the best. It lies, then, let me repeat, in a profound apprehension of God in his majesty, with the poignant realization, which inevitably accompanies this apprehension, of the relation sustained to God by the creature as such and particularly by the sinful creature. The Calvinist is the man who has seen God,

and who, having seen God in his glory, is filled on the one hand with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight, as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and on the other with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God who receives sinners. He who believes in God without reserve, and is determined that God shall be God to him, in all his thinking, feeling, willing,—in the entire compass of his life-activities, intellectual, moral, spiritual,—throughout all his individual, social, religious relations,—is, by the force of that strictest of all logic which presides over the outworking of principles into thought and life, by the very necessity of the case, a Calvinist.

If we wish to reduce this statement to more formal terms, we may say perhaps that Calvinism in its fundamental idea implies three things. In it, objectively speaking, theism comes to its rights; subjectively speaking, the religious relation attains its purity; soteriologically speaking, evangelical religion finds at length its full expression and its secure stability. Theism comes to its rights only in a teleological view of the universe, which recognizes in the whole course of events the orderly working out of the plan of God, whose will is consequently conceived as the ultimate cause of all things. The religious relation attains its purity only when an attitude of absolute dependence on God is not merely assumed in the act, say, of prayer, but is sustained through all the activities of life, intellectual, emotional, executive. And evangelical religion reaches its full manifestation and its stable form only when the sinful soul rests in humble, self-emptying trust purely on the God of grace as the immediate and sole source of all the efficiency which enters into its salvation. From these things shine out upon us the formative principle of Calvinism. The Calvinist

is the man who sees God behind all phenomena and in all that occurs recognizes the hand of God, working out his will; who makes the attitude of the soul to God in prayer its permanent attitude in all its life-activities; and who casts himself on the grace of God alone, excluding every trace of dependence on self from the whole work of his salvation.

I think it important to insist that Calvinism is not a specific variety of theistic thought, religious experience, evangelical faith, but just the perfect manifestation of these things. The difference between it and other forms of theism, religion, evangelicalism is a difference not of kind but of degree. There are not many kinds of theism, religion, evangelicalism, each with its own special characteristics, among which men are at liberty to choose, as may suit their individual tastes. There is but one kind of theism, religion, evangelicalism; and if there are several constructions laying claim to these names they differ from one another not as correlative species of a more inclusive genus, but only as more or less good or bad specimens of the same thing differ from one another. Calvinism comes forward simply as pure theism, religion, evangelicalism, as over against less pure theism, religion, evangelicalism. It does not take its position then by the side of other types of these things; it takes its place over all else that claims to be these things, as embodying what they all ought to be. It has no difficulty, then, in recognizing the theistic character of all truly theistic thought, the religious note in all really religious manifestations, the evangelical quality of all actual evangelical faith. It refuses to be set antagonistically over against any of these things wherever they exist in any degree: it claims them in every instance of their emergence as its own and seeks only to give them their due place in thought and life. Whoever believes in God; whoever recognizes his de-

pendence on God; whoever hears in his heart the echo of the *soli Deo gloria* of the evangelical profession—by whatever name he may call himself, by whatever logical puzzles his understanding may be confused—Calvinism recognizes as its own, and as only requiring to give full validity to these fundamental principles —which underlie and give its body to all true religion—to become explicitly a Calvinist.

Calvinism is born, we perceive, of the sense of God. God fills the whole horizon of the Calvinist's feeling and thought. One of the consequences which flow from this is the high supernaturalism which informs at once his religious consciousness and his doctrinal construction. Calvinism, indeed, would not be badly defined as the tendency which is determined to do justice to the immediately supernatural, as in the first, so in the second creation. The strength and purity of its apprehension of the supernatural Fact (which is God) removes all embarrassment from it in the presence of the supernatural act (which is miracle). In everything which enters into the process of the recovery of sinful man to good and to God, it is impelled by the force of its first principle to assign the initiative to God. A supernatural revelation in which God makes known to man his will and his purposes of grace; a supernatural record of this revelation in a supernaturally given book, in which God gives his revelation permanence and extension;—such things are to the Calvinist matters of course. And, above all things, he can but insist with the utmost strenuousness on the immediate supernaturalness of the actual work of redemption. This, of course, in its impetration. It is no strain to his faith to believe in a supernatural Redeemer, breaking his way to earth through a virgin's womb, bursting the bonds of death and returning to his Father's side to share the glory which he had with the

Father before the world was. But above all is he assured that this supernaturally purchased redemption is applied to the soul in an equally supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Thus it comes about that monergistic regeneration—"irresistible grace," "effectual calling," our older theologians called it—becomes the hinge of the Calvinistic soteriology and lies much more deeply imbedded in the system than many a doctrine more closely connected with it in the popular mind. Indeed, the soteriological significance of predestination itself consists to the Calvinist largely in the safeguard it affords to the immediate supernaturalness of salvation. What lies at the heart of his soteriology is absolute exclusion of creaturely efficiency in the induction of the saving process, that the pure grace of God in salvation may be magnified. Only so could he express his sense of men's complete dependence as sinners on the free mercy of a saving God; or extrude the evil leaven of synergism by which God is robbed of his glory and man is encouraged to attribute to some power, some act, some initiative of his own, his participation in that salvation which in reality has come to him from pure grace.

There is nothing, therefore, against which Calvinism sets its face with more firmness than every form and degree of autosoterism. Above everything else it is determined to recognize God, in his Son Jesus Christ, acting through the Holy Spirit whom he has sent, as our veritable Saviour. To it, sinful man stands in need, not of inducements or assistance to save himself, but precisely of saving; and Jesus Christ has not come to advise, or urge, or woo, or help him to save himself, but to save him: to save him by his atoning sacrifice, and the prevalent working in him of the Holy Spirit. This is the root of the Calvinistic soteriology; and it is because this deep sense

of human helplessness and this profound consciousness of indebtedness for all that enters into salvation to the free grace of God is the root of its soteriology, that election becomes to Calvinism the *cor cordis* of the gospel. He who knows that it is God who has chosen him and not he who has chosen God, and that he owes every step and stage of his salvation to the working out of this choice of God, would be an ingrate indeed if he gave not the whole glory of his salvation to the inexplicable election of the divine love.

Calvinism, however, is not merely a soteriology. Deep as its interest is in salvation, it cannot escape the question, Why should God thus intervene in the lives of sinners to rescue them from the consequences of their sin? And it cannot miss the answer, Because it is to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus it cannot pause until it places the scheme of salvation itself in relation with a complete world-view in which it becomes subsidiary to the glory of the Lord God Almighty. If all things are from God, so to the Calvinist all things are also unto God; and to it God will be all in all. It is born of the reflection in the heart of man of the glory of a God who will not give his honor to another, and it draws its life from its constant gaze upon this great image. And let us not fail punctually to note that "it is the only system in which the whole order of the world is thus brought into a rational unity with the doctrine of grace and in which the glorification of God is carried out with absolute completeness." Therefore the future of Christianity lies, as its past has lain, in its hands. For it is certainly true, as has been said by a profound thinker of our own time, that "it is only with such a universal conception of God, established in a living way, that we can face with hope of complete conquest all the spiritual dangers and terrors of

our times." "It, however," continues the same thinker, "is deep enough and large enough and divine enough, rightly understood, to confront them and do battle with them all in vindication of the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the world, and of the justice and love of the Divine Personality."

This is the system of doctrine to the elaboration and defense of which John Calvin gave all his powers three hundred and fifty years ago. And it is chiefly because he gave all his powers to commending to us this system of doctrine that we are here to-day to thank God for giving the world the man who has given the world this precious gift.

PRESENT-DAY ATTITUDE TO CALVINISM

The subject upon which I am to address you involves the determination of a matter of fact, about which it is not easy to feel fully assured. What is the present-day attitude towards Calvinism? The answer to this question is apt to vary with the point of sight of the observer, or rather with the horizon which his eye surveys.

Our learning to-day is "made in Germany," our culture comes to us largely from England. And the German learning of the day has a sadly rationalistic tendency; which is superposed moreover on a Lutheran foundation that has an odd way of cropping up and protruding itself in unexpected places. Similarly, English culture is not merely shot through, but stained through and through, with an Anglican coloring. Lutheranism was ever intolerant of Calvinism. Anglicanism was certainly never patient of it. Naturalism is its precise contradictory. He who breathes the atmosphere of books, therefore,—whether books of erudition or books of pure literature,—is apt to find it stifling to his Calvinism.

There is, of course, another side of the matter. There are very likely more Calvinists in the world to-day than ever before. Even relatively, the professedly Calvinistic churches are, no doubt, holding their own. There are important tendencies of modern thought which play into the hands of this or that Calvinistic conception. Above all there are to be found everywhere humble souls who, in the quiet of retired lives, have caught a vision of God in his glory, and are cherishing in their hearts

that vital flame of complete dependence on him which is the very essence of Calvinism.

On the whole, however, I think we must allow, especially when we are contemplating the trend of current thought, that the fortunes of Calvinism are not at their flood. Those whose heritage it was, have in large numbers drifted away from it. Those who still formally profess it, do not always illustrate it in life or proclaim it in word. Are there any "Calvinists without reserve" left among the acknowledged leaders, at least, of French-speaking Christendom, blood of whose blood and bone of whose bone Calvin himself was? Outside of the little band of the followers of H. M. Kohlbrügge, are there any left throughout the broad stretches of those German lands in which Calvinism was once able to give so good an account of itself? Even in Scotland, we have been told by Dr. Hastie that, so far as the greater churches are concerned, the race of Calvinists, of strict construction at least, practically died out with William Cunningham and Thomas J. Crawford. Happily in sturdy little Holland, amid wide-spread blight, there is still a fruitful stock, and the Free Churches of the Netherlands especially show yet a vigorous Calvinistic life: they possess to-day, in fact, in Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck a theologian of genius and a theologian of erudition worthy of the best traditions of Holland's great past. Here in America the impulse received from the great teachers who illuminated the middle of the nineteenth century—Charles Hodge, Robert J. Breckinridge, James H. Thornwell, Henry Boynton Smith, William G. T. Shedd, Robert L. Dabney, Archibald Alexander Hodge—I enumerate them in chronological order—we are thankful to say is not yet exhausted. There remains, then, undoubtedly a remnant according to the election of grace. But the condi-

tion of a remnant, while it may well be a healthful one,—bearing in it, as a fruitful seed, the promise and potency of future expansion,—is little likely to be a happy one. Unfriendly faces meet it on every side; if doubt and hesitation are not engendered, at least an apologetical attitude is fostered; and an apologetical attitude is not becoming in Calvinists, whose trust is in the Lord God Almighty. In such a situation Calvinism seems shorn of its strength, and is tempted to stand fearful and half ashamed in the marts of men. I have no wish to paint the situation in too dark colors. I fully believe that Calvinism, as it has supplied the sinews of evangelical Christianity in the past, so is its strength in the present, and is its hope for the future. Meanwhile, does it not seem, in large circles at all events, to be thrown very much on the defensive? In the measure in which you feel this to be the case, in that measure you will be prepared to ask with me for the causes and significance of this state of things.

We should begin, I think, by recalling precisely what Calvinism is. It may be fairly summed up, I suppose, in these three propositions: Calvinism is theism come to its rights. Calvinism is religion at the height of its conception. Calvinism is evangelicalism in its purest and most stable expression.

Calvinism, I say, is theism come to its rights. For in what does theism come to its rights but in a teleological view of the universe? For, though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth,—as there are gods many and lords many conceived of men,—yet to the theist there can be but one God, of whom are all things and unto whom are all things. You see, we have already slipped into the Calvinistic formula: The will of God is the cause of things. I do not say, you will observe, that theism and Calvinism have points of affinity,

lie close to one another; I say they are identical. I say that the theism which is truly theism, consistently theism, all that theism to be really theism must be, is already in principle Calvinism; that Calvinism in its cosmological aspect is nothing more than theism in its purity. To fall away from Calvinism is to fall away by just so much from a truly theistic conception of the universe. Of course, then, to fall away in any degree from a pure theism in our conception of things is just by that much to fall away from Calvinism. Wherever, then, in our view of the world an imperfect theism has crept in, there Calvinism has become impossible.

Calvinism, I have said, again, is religion at the height of its conception. For whatever else may enter into the conscious religious relation,—a vague feeling of mystery, a struggling reaching out towards the infinite, a deep sentiment of reverence and awe, a keen recognition or dull apprehension of responsibility,—certainly its substance lies in a sense of absolute dependence upon a supreme being. I do not say, you will observe, an absolute feeling of dependence, which in the Schleiermacheran meaning, at least, of a feeling without intellectual content, were an absurdity. What I say is, that religion in its substance is a sense of absolute dependence on God, and reaches the height of its conception only when this sense of absolute dependence is complete and all-pervasive, in the thought and feeling and life. But, when this stage is reached, we have just Calvinism. For what is Calvinism but the thetical expression of religion, conceived as absolute dependence on God? Wherever we find religion in its purity, therefore, there Calvinism is implicit. I do not say, observe again, that an approach to Calvinism is traceable there, in less or greater measure. I say, there Calvinism is—implicitly indeed, but really—present.

Religion in its purity is Calvinism in life; and you can fall away from Calvinism only by just in that measure falling away from religion, and you do fall away from Calvinism just in proportion as you fall away from religion in its purity.

It is, however, dreadfully easy to fall away from religion at the height of its conception. We may assume the truly religious attitude of heart and mind for a moment; it is hard to maintain it and give it unbroken dominance in our thought, feeling and action. Our soul's attitude in prayer—that is the religious attitude at its height. But do we preserve the attitude we assume towards God in prayer when we rise from our knees? Or does our "amen" cut it off at once, and we go on about our affairs in an entirely different mood? Now, Calvinism means just the preservation in all our thinking and feeling and action of that attitude of utter dependence on God which we assume in prayer. It is the mood of religion made determinative of all our thinking and feeling and willing. It is therefore conterminous with religion in the height of its conception. Wherever, therefore, religion in any measure loses hold of the reins of life and our imminent thought has slipped away from its control,—there Calvinism has become impossible.

I have said, again, that Calvinism is evangelicalism in its pure and only stable expression. When we say evangelicalism, we say sin and salvation. Evangelicalism is a soteriological conception: it impliess in and salvation from sin. There may be religion without evangelicalism. We may go further: religion might conceivably exist at the height of its conception, and evangelicalism be lacking. But not in sinners. Evangelicalism is religion at the height of its conception as it forms itself in the hearts of sinners. It means utter dependence on God for salvation; it implies, therefore, need of salvation, and

a profound sense of this need, along with an equally profound sense of helplessness in the presence of this need, and utter dependence on God for its satisfaction. Its type is found in the publican, who smote his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" No question there of saving himself, of helping God to save him, or of opening the way to God to save him; no question of anything but I am a sinner, and all my hope is in God my Saviour! Now this is Calvinism; not, note once more, something like Calvinism or an approach to Calvinism, but just Calvinism in its vital manifestation. Wherever this attitude of heart is found and is given expression in direct and unambiguous terms, there is Calvinism. Wherever this attitude of mind and heart is fallen away from in however small a measure, there Calvinism has become impossible.

For Calvinism, in this soteriological aspect of it, is just the perception and the thetical expression and defense of the utter dependence of the soul on the free grace of God for salvation. All its so-called hard features—its doctrine of original sin; yes, speak it right out, its doctrine of total depravity and the entire inability of the sinful will to good; its doctrine of election; or, put it in the words everywhere spoken against, its doctrine of predestination and preterition, of reprobation itself—mean just this and nothing more. Calvinism will not play fast and loose with the free grace of God; it is set upon giving to God, and to God alone, the glory and all the glory of salvation. There are others than Calvinists, no doubt, who would fain make the same great confession. But they make it with reserves; or they painfully justify the making of it by some tenuous theory which confuses nature and grace. They leave logical pitfalls on this side or that; and the difference between logical pitfalls and other pitfalls is that the wayfarer may fall into the others, but the

plain man, just because his is a simple mind, must fall into these. Calvinism will leave no logical pitfalls; and will make no reserves; and will have nothing to do with theories whose function it is to explain away facts. It confesses with a heart full of adoring gratitude that to God and to God alone belongs salvation and the whole of salvation; that he it is and he alone who works salvation in its whole reach. Any falling away in the slightest measure from this great confession is to fall away from Calvinism. Any intrusion of any human merit, or act, or disposition, or power, as ground or cause or occasion, into the process of divine salvation—whether in the way of capacity to resist or ability to improve grace; of the opening of the way to the reception of grace, or of the employment of grace already received—is a breach with Calvinism. Calvinism is the casting of the soul wholly on the free grace of God alone, to whom alone belongs salvation.

Such is the nature of Calvinism. And such being the nature of Calvinism, it seems scarcely necessary to inquire why its fortunes appear from time to time, and now again in our own time, to suffer some depression. It can no more perish out of the earth than the sense of sin can pass out of the heart of sinful humanity; than the perception of God can fade out of the minds of dependent creatures; than God himself can perish out of the heavens. Its fortunes are bound up with the fortunes of theism, religion, evangelicalism; for it is just theism, religion, evangelicalism in the purity of their conception and manifestation. In the *purity* of their conception and manifestation! There is the seat of the difficulty. It is proverbially hard to retain, much more to maintain, perfection. And how can precisely these things be maintained at their height? Consider the currents of thought flowing up and down in the world,

tending—I do not now say to obliterate the perception of the God of all: atheistic naturalism, materialistic or pantheistic evolutionism—but to blunt or obscure our perception of the divine hand in the sequence of events and the issues of things. Consider the pride of man, his assertion of freedom, his boast of power, his refusal to acknowledge the sway of another's will. Consider the ingrained confidence of the sinner in his own fundamentally good nature and his full ability to perform all that can be justly demanded of him. Is it strange that in this world—in this particular age of this world—it should prove difficult to preserve not only active, but vivid and dominant, the perception of the everywhere determining hand of God, the sense of absolute dependence on him, the conviction of utter inability to do even the least thing to rescue ourselves from sin—at the height of their conception? Is it not enough to account for whatever depression Calvinism may be suffering in the world to-day, to point to the natural difficulty in this materialistic age, —conscious of its newly realized powers over against the forces of nature and filled with the pride of achievement and of material well-being,—of guarding our perception of the governing hand of God in all things in its perfection, maintaining our sense of dependence on a higher power in full force, and preserving our feeling of sin, unworthiness and helplessness in its integrity? Is not the significance of the depression of Calvinism, so far as it is real, then, merely that to our age the vision of God has become somewhat obscured in the midst of abounding material triumphs, the religious emotion has in some measure ceased to be the determining force in life, and the evangelical attitude of complete dependence on God for salvation does not readily commend itself to men who are accustomed to lay forceful hands on everything else they wish and do not quite see why they may not take heaven also by storm?

Such suggestions may seem to you rather general, perhaps even somewhat indefinite. They appear to me nevertheless to embody the true, and the whole, account of whatever depression of fortunes Calvinism may be suffering to-day. In our current philosophies, whether monistic evolutionism or pluralistic pragmatism, theism is far from coming to its rights. In the strenuous activities of our materialized life, religion has little opportunity to assert itself in its purity. In our restless assertion of our personal power and worth evangelicalism easily falls into the background. In an atmosphere created by such a state of things, how could Calvinism thrive? We may, of course, press on to a more specific account of its depressed fortunes. But in attempting to be more specific, what can we do but single out particular aspects of the general situation for special remark? It is possible, indeed, that the singling out of one of these aspects may give clearness and point to the general fact. It may be worth while, therefore, to attend to one of these special aspects for a moment.

Let us observe this, then—that Calvinism is only another name for consistent supernaturalism in religion. The central fact of Calvinism is the vision of God. Its determining principle is zeal for the divine honor. What it sets itself to do is to render to God his rights in every sphere of life-activity. In this it begins and centers and ends. It is this that is said when it is said that it is theism come to its rights, since then everything that comes to pass is viewed as the direct outworking of the divine purpose; that it is religion at the height of its conception, since then God is consciously felt as him in whom we live and move and have our being; that it is evangelicalism in its purity, since then we cast ourselves as sinners, without reserve, wholly on the mercy of the divine grace. It

is this sense of God, of God's presence, of God's power, of God's all-pervading activity—most of all in the process of salvation—which constitutes Calvinism. When the Calvinist gazes into the mirror of the world, whether the world of nature or the world of events, his attention is held not by the mirror itself (with the cunning construction of which scientific investigators may no doubt very properly busy themselves), but by the Face of God which he sees reflected therein. When the Calvinist contemplates the religious life, he is less concerned with the psychological nature and relations of the emotions which surge through the soul (with which the votaries of the new science of the psychology of religion are perhaps not wholly unfruitfully engaging themselves) than with the divine source from which they spring, the divine object of which they take hold. When the Calvinist considers the state of his soul and the possibility of its rescue from death and sin, he may not indeed be blind to the responses which it may by the grace of God be enabled to make to the divine grace, but he absorbs himself not in them but in it, and sees in every step of his recovery to good and to God the almighty working of God's grace. The Calvinist in a word is the man who sees God; he has caught sight of the ineffable Vision, and he will not let it fade a moment from his eyes. God in nature, God in history, God in grace; everywhere he sees God in his mighty stepping, everywhere he feels the working of his mighty arm, the throbbing of his mighty heart. The Calvinist is, therefore, by way of eminence the supernaturalist in the world of thought. The world itself is to him a supernatural product; not merely in the sense that somewhere, away back before all time, God made it; but that God is making it now, and in every event that falls out, in every modification of what is that takes place, his hand is visible,

as through all occurrences his one increasing purpose runs. Man himself is his, created for his glory, and having as the one supreme end of his existence to glorify his Maker, and haply also to enjoy him forever. And salvation, in every step and stage of it, is of God; conceived in God's love, wrought out by God's own Son, in a supernatural life and death in this world of sin, and applied by God's Spirit in a series of acts as supernatural as the virgin birth and the resurrection of the Son of God themselves, it is a supernatural work through and through. To the Calvinist thus the church of God is as direct a creation of God as the first creation itself. In this supernaturalism the whole thought and feeling and life of the Calvinist is steeped. Without it there can be no Calvinism; for it is just this that is Calvinism.

Now, the age in which we live is anything but supernaturalistic. It is distinctly hostile to supernaturalism. Its most striking characteristic is precisely its deeply rooted and wide-reaching naturalism of thought and sentiment. We know the origin of this modern naturalism; we can trace its history. What it is of more importance to observe, however, is that we cannot escape its influence. On its rise in the latter part of the seventeenth century, a new era began, an era in which men have had little thought for the rights of God in their absorption in the rights of man. English deism, French encyclopedism, German illuminism—these are some of the fruits it has borne in the progress of its development; and now it has at length run to seed in our own day in what arrogates to itself the name of the New Protestantism—that New Protestantism which repudiates Luther and all his fervid ways and turns rather for its spiritual parentage to the religious indifferentism of Erasmus. It has invaded with its solvent every form of thought and every

activity of life. It has given us a naturalistic philosophy (in which all being is evaporated into becoming), a naturalistic science (the single-minded zeal of which is to eliminate design from the universe), a naturalistic politics (the first fruits of which was the French Revolution, and its last may well be an atheistic socialism), a naturalistic history (which can scarcely find place for even human personality among the causes of events), and a naturalistic religion, which says "Hands off!" to God, if indeed it troubles itself to consider whether there be a God, or, if there be a God, whether he be a person, or if he be a person, whether he can or will concern himself with men.

You, as ministers of the gospel, have been greatly clogged by this naturalism of current thought in the prosecution of your calling. How many of those to whom you would carry the message of grace do you find preoccupied with a naturalistic prejudice? Who of your acquaintance really posits God as a factor in the development of the world? How often have you been exhorted to seek a "natural" progress for the course of events in history? Yes, even for the history of redemption. So, even in the region of your own theological science, a new Bible has been given to you; not offered to you merely, but violently thrust upon you as the only Bible a rational man can receive—a new Bible reconstructed on the principle of natural development, torn to pieces and rearranged under the overmastering impulse to find a "natural" order of sequence for its books, and a "natural" course of development for the religion whose records it preserves. But why stop with the Bible? Your divine Redeemer himself has been reconstructed on the same naturalistic lines. For a century and a half now—from Reimarus to Wrede—all the resources of an age preëminent for

scholarship have been bent to the task of giving you a "natural" Jesus. Why talk here of the miracles of the Old Testament or of the New? It is the Miracle of the Old Testament and the New which is really brought into question. Why dispute as to the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus? It is to the elimination of Jesus himself, as aught but a simple man of his day, in nothing, except perhaps an unusually vivid religious experience, differentiated from other Galilæan peasants of his time, that the naturalistic frenzy of our age is tending. And so furiously has the task been driven on that the choice that is set before us at the end of the day is practically between no Jesus at all, or a fanatic, not to say a paranoiac Jesus. In this anti-supernaturalistic atmosphere, is it strange that men find the pure supernaturalism of the Calvinistic confession difficult—that they waver in their firm confidence that it is God who reigns in heaven and on earth, that in him we all live and move and have our being, that it is he and not ourselves who creates in us every impulse to good, and that it is his almighty arm alone that can rescue us from sin and bring to our helpless souls salvation? Is it strange that here too men travel the broad road beaten smooth by many feet, and the Calvinistic gate seems so narrow that few there be that find it, and the Calvinistic way so straitened that few there be who go in thereat?

But let us make no mistake here. For here too Calvinism is just Christianity. The supernaturalism for which Calvinism stands is the very breath of the nostrils of Christianity; without it Christianity cannot exist. And let us not imagine that we can pick and choose with respect to the aspects of this supernaturalism which we acknowledge. That we may, for example, retain supernaturalism in the origination of Christianity, and

forego the supernaturalism with which Calvinism is more immediately concerned—the supernaturalism of the application of Christianity. Men will not believe that a religion the actual working of which in the world is natural, can have required to be ushered into the world with supernatural pomp and display. These supernaturals stand or fall together. A supernatural Redeemer is not needed for a natural salvation; if we can and do save ourselves, it were grossly incongruous that God should come down from heaven to save us, trailing clouds of glory with him as he came. The logic of the Socinian system gave us at once a human Christ and an autosoteric religion. The same logic will work to-day, and every day till the end of time. It is only for a truly supernatural salvation that a truly supernatural redemption or a truly supernatural Redeemer is demanded —or can be believed in.

And this reveals to us the real place which Calvinism holds in the controversies of to-day, and the service it is to render in the preservation of Christianity for the future. Only the Calvinist is the consistent supernaturalist; and only consistent supernaturalism can save supernatural religion for the world. The supernatural Fact, which is God; the supernatural act, which is miracle; the supernatural book, which is the revealed will of God; the supernatural redemption, which is the divine deed of the divine Christ; the supernatural salvation, which is the divine work of the divine Spirit—these things form a system, and you cannot draw one item out without shaking the whole. What Calvinism particularly asserts is the supernaturalism of salvation, as the immediate work of God the Holy Spirit in the soul, by virtue of which we are made new creatures in Christ our Redeemer and framed into the sons of God the Father. And it is only he that heartily believes in

this supernaturalism of salvation who is not fatally handicapped in meeting the assaults of that anti-supernaturalistic world-view which flaunts itself so triumphantly about us. Conceal it from ourselves as we may, defeat here lies athwart the path of all half-hearted schemes and compromising constructions. This is what was meant by the late Dr. Henry Boynton Smith, when he declared roundly: "One thing is certain,—that infidel science will rout everything excepting thoroughgoing Christian orthodoxy. The fight will be between a stiff thoroughgoing orthodoxy and a stiff thoroughgoing infidelity. It will be, for example, Augustine or Comte, Athanasius or Hegel, Luther or Schopenhauer, J. S. Mill or John Calvin."

This witness is true. We cannot be supernaturalistic in patches of our thinking, and naturalistic in its substance. We cannot be supernaturalistic with regard to the remote facts of history, and naturalistic with regard to the intimate events of experience. We cannot be supernaturalistic with regard to what occurred two thousand years ago in Palestine, and simply naturalistic with regard to what occurs to-day in our hearts. No form of Christian supernaturalism can be ultimately maintained, in any department of life or thought, except it carry with it the supernaturalism of salvation, and a consistent supernaturalism of salvation is only another name for Calvinism. Calvinism thus emerges to our sight as nothing more or less than the hope of the world.